

## FAITH AND ITS ATTENDANT PRIVILEGES

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A SERMON  
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*“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them which believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”  
John 1:11-13.*

ACCORDING to this text, the principal matter in our salvation is faith. Faith is described as “receiving” Jesus. It is the empty cup placed under the flowing stream. It is the penniless hand held out for heavenly alms. It is also described in the text as “believing on His name.” And this reception, this *believing*, is the main thing in real godliness. Faith is the simplest thing conceivable! When we hear people sing, “Only believe and you shall be saved,” they sing the truth, for we have the divine assurance that, “whoever believes on Him is not condemned.” The gospel message is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” The act of faith is the simplest in the world. It may be performed by a little child. It has often been performed by persons so short-witted that they have been almost incapable of any other intellectual act. And yet faith is as sublime as it is simple, as potent as it is plain! It is the connecting link between impotence and omnipotence, between necessity and all-sufficiency. He that by faith lays hold on God has accomplished the simplest and yet the grandest act of the mind. Faith is apparently so small a matter that many who hear the gospel can hardly believe it possible that we can really mean to teach that it brings salvation to the soul. They have even misunderstood us and imagined that we have meant to say that if persons believed they were saved, they were saved.

If that were the doctrine of justification by faith, it would be the most wicked of delusions. It is not so! Faith in Jesus as our Savior is a very different thing from persuading ourselves to believe that we are saved when we are not! We believe that men are saved by faith, alone—but not by a faith which is alone. They are saved by faith without works, but not by a faith which is without works. The faith which saves is the most operative principle known to the human mind, for he that believes in Jesus for salvation, being saved, and knowing that he is saved, loves Him that saved him—and that love is the key of the whole matter! The loving believer ceases from everything which would displease Him whom he loves. He tries to abound in that which will please Him, his beloved Redeemer. So salvation becomes the great reason for gratitude and changes the heart! And, the heart being changed, all the issues of life are changed. The man is like a watch which has a new mainspring—not a mere face and hands repaired—but new inward machinery with freshly adjusted works which act to a different time and tune. And whereas he went wrong before, now he goes right, because he is right within. Faith is so simple that the little child who believes becomes, before long, strong in the Lord. It is a vital force which gets such mastery over men that it makes them other men than they ever were before! And as it grows, it lifts them up from being mere men, to be men of God, and then beyond that it leads them on till they become heroes and they stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of flames, obtain promises and enter into rest. Faith, the size of a grain of mustard seed, develops into faith that moves mountains! Faith of the little child increases into faith of the giant! May we know by *experience* how true this is!

Our object is to show what faith does. And, oh, while I am trying to speak of this great gift of the Lord to men by which they obtain every other gift, may many of you who have not believed come to believe in Jesus! If you do, there is nothing in this text but what shall certainly be yours.

**I.** We shall begin by saying that FAITH MAKES THE GRANDEST OF DISTINCTIONS AMONG MEN.

This is clear from the text. Faith makes the grandest distinctions among men, for the text begins, “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not,” that is one company—“but as many as received Him”—that is another company. Were an angel to come here with a drawn sword and to suddenly separate the righteous from the wicked with one stroke, you would find that his sword had for its edge the question, “Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?” This divides men into saved believers and unbelievers with the wrath of God abiding on them. “He that believes has passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation; but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God.” There are many distinctions among men—some proper and some improper—and there always will be such distinctions while this age lasts. There are rich and poor—and I fear there never will be a form of society in which there will be no poor. Even in the kingdom of Christ, when He comes, it seems there will be poor, for He shall judge the poor and needy. There will be the governors and the governed; the wise and the foolish; the teachers and the taught. But, mark you, these distinctions pass away. The grave is an awful leveler. There in the sepulcher Caesar is no more than his vassal. Socrates no greater than the slave who washed his feet. The great emperor who swayed the scepter has, in the tomb, no higher rank than the bondwoman who toiled at the mill. Death recognizes no caste, the sepulcher believes in equality. At the judgment seat, temporal distinctions will not be recognized except so far as they involve responsibility—and so far as that point goes, some of the great and mighty will then wish that they had been slaves—and regret that they cannot hide their heads among those whom they oppressed! The grand distinction which will outlast all time is that of faith or lack of faith. Do you believe or do you doubt? This makes the broad line of distinction! To the receivers of Christ or the non-receivers—to which do you belong, dear friend?

I want you to observe that the faith which makes the distinction is described here as *a receptive faith*. Saying faith becomes a working faith by degrees, but at first it is a receptive faith. And in fact, work as it may, afterwards, it must always be a receptive faith. We only work out our salvation as God works in us—and even the highest actions that are ever done for God are performed with the strength which God supplies. Working faith is merely receptive faith in action. A receiving faith is the vital point and it is absolutely necessary that the soul should receive Jesus to be its all in all. “To as many as received Him.” Have you ever received *Him*, the Lord Jesus, the real Christ? Do you talk to Him? Do you know Him? Is He a companion? Is He a friend of yours? If you have received a personal Christ by confiding, trusting and depending upon Him, you are on the safe side of the house!

The text further says, “Even to them that believe *on His name*.” Now, what is it to believe on His name? It struck me it would be a fair and a right way of illustrating the text to notice what are the names which are used in the former verses of this chapter. Please notice, in the first chapter of John, where our text is, what name of Jesus is used. “In the beginning was *the Word*”—that is the first name. The Word. What is the meaning of that? Why is Jesus Christ called the Word? Why, because, brethren, if I want to communicate to you by writing or by speech, I use a word. My thought is here—and there is your mind. I could get the thought partly to your mind by a picture—that is what God has done in nature. But we cannot use pictures for a full communication of knowledge—we must employ words. So God, wanting to speak to man, spoke by sending Christ and Christ is God’s word. Have you ever received Christ as God’s word to you? Will you just think of it, what a wonderful word He was? God said, “Men, stand no longer at a distance from Me. I will come and dwell among you”—33 years, the Son of God dwelt among the sons of men! “Men,” He said, “men, I must punish your sins.” There hung His Son bleeding on the tree for sin—God saying in a wonderful way—“I hate sin and therefore Jesus must die.” The Lord next cries, “Men, I can now be just and yet can justify you. Come unto Me.” There is Jesus risen from the dead, in newness of life, and He goes into heaven a man and, as man, is received to the throne of God—and thus, God says in a word to us, “I am willing to receive you up to My very throne.” Actions speak louder than words, but Christ, Himself, is the word, the love-word, the tender word, the very heart-word of God—with acts attending and following which make His utterance the more convincing. God kept nothing back when He spoke Christ. He spoke that word and that word is the fullness of God’s soul to sinners. Have you ever accepted Christ as the word between you and God? Have you ever spo-

ken to God that word back again by pleading the name of Christ? Lord, there is no communication between me and You except this. Whenever You speak, you say, “Christ,” and my reply is, “Christ.” When I want You to pardon me, I say, “Christ.” When I need You to bless me, indeed, and give me answers to my prayers, I plead, “Christ.” That is the word from God to man, and back again from man to God. Now, to as many as believe on His name as the word, to them He gives power to become the sons of God. But many have never accepted Him as, “the word,” any more than if God had never spoken. They are deaf. At any rate, there is the word and they have never received it.

Look down the chapter and you will find that Jesus is described as *the life*. “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life.” Have you believed on His name as the life? Man is *dead* by nature. When God said to Adam, “In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die,” Adam did die that very day and that is the key word to what is meant by death in the Scriptures. Did he cease to exist? No, nor will you. But he ceased to live and that is a very different thing. To exist is not to live; there is a wide distinction there. To die is not to cease to exist—no thoughtful man should fall into such an error. What is death? Practically, it is the separation of a living being into its component elements. When the seed is put into the ground, the apostle says, it is not quickened unless it dies, or dissolves into its constituent elements. It dies in order more perfectly to live. When we die, neither body nor soul ceases to exist, but they cease to be united and their separation is death. When a soul departs (and the life of the body is the soul), the life of the body is gone. When a soul dies, it is separated from God, for union to God is the soul’s true life. That is the death which Adam died and which every impenitent sinner will have to die. No, that is the death which every sinner is under now, for, “He that believes not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” Listen well that, “He that believes not has not life.” He has an existence and always will have, but he has not life—he abides in death. But as for the man, who believes in Jesus, he gets back his God and that is his life. Jesus says, “He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that lives and believes in Me shall never die.” “I am the resurrection and the life.” When we are brought back to God, God has made our soul alive. A soul without God is like a fair palace which has been deserted—you pace through all its halls and there is not a sound. It is all death, decay, and emptiness. But when the king comes back, again, to his palace, the merry bells peal out their joyful notes! All is rejoicing and there is life again throughout the house. God is the life of the soul and as many as receive God in Christ, receive the life.

Now see, Jesus is first the word, that is God speaking to men; secondly the life, that is God quickening man and dwelling in him. Have we so received the Christ of God?

Note the third name here. “In Him was life, and the life was the *light* of men.” Notice that this name of Jesus is repeated many times if you read through the chapter. “John came for a witness to bear witness of the *light*. He was not that *light*, but he was sent to bear witness of that *light*. That was the true *light*,” and so on. So that the next name of Christ we have in this chapter is the *light*. Have we received Christ as the light? What is it to have Christ to be your light? What is light? It is that by which we see. Everybody sees in a light. Take an illustration—only an illustration. A merchant comes to a city, town, village. He calculates whether it is a good place for business. “Bad place, this,” he says. “A man cannot live here. It is a bad situation.” And he is not content unless he gets near the Bank or in Lombard Street, or some other business quarter. Now, look at the artist. He has another light. You take that artist into the city and he says, “I could not live here in this dreary wilderness of brick, amid these fogs! Let me get away to North Wales, or somewhere where the picturesque is to be seen.” And he settles himself down in Bettws-y-coed, and he says, “This is beautiful.” Take the rich man there and say to him, “You are to live here for 20 years.” “Twenty years?” he says, “I could not live here a month! It is preposterous. This is not a place where a man can live.” Bring a man of gaiety into a religious circle and he says, “O, I need a place where there is some life.” I have been traveling, sometimes, where I thought the scenery very beautiful and I have heard young men say, “This is a hateful place: there is no life here.” Everybody sees according to the light he sees by. My dear hearer, have you ever seen things in the light of Christ? Did you ever feel, “This is the place where I can live, for here are Christians with whom I can commune. Here is the gospel preached and my soul will be fed here. I shall learn much of Christ. This is a sphere in

which I can be useful”? When you have life you will get light—and you will see things in that light. You will see yourself in the light of Christ. You will say, “O God, be merciful to me a sinner.” Everything looks according to your light. Yellow spectacles will make everything look yellow, but get the true light, the only light that can lighten any man that comes into the world, and things will be seen in truth. If you get Christ within you, you have light, indeed! So the question comes back—have we believed on the name of Jesus as the Word, the life and the light? If we have, it has made a distinction between us and others, and there is a deep gulf fixed between us, across which, thank God, men may come to us by sovereign grace, but across which we shall never return—for he that has received the *word* will find in it an incorruptible Seed! He that has received the *life* has received with it the assurance, “Because I live, you shall live also.” And he that has received the *light* knows that it shines more and more unto the perfect day.

This distinction, then, is a very grand one and it is one which obliterates all others, for the text puts it, “As *many* as received Him”—that is, if the chimney-sweep receives Christ, he is a child of God, and if the Czar of Russia receives Christ, he is a child of God—but not the one more than the other. If they receive Him—that is the point—they become the sons of God! It is a distinction, therefore, which is to be sought after abundantly by us, and which has to do with present things. “As many as received Him, to them *gave* He power to become the sons of God.” Now I charge you, do not think of religion as a thing to be run after when you die, as your friends may seek after an undertaker to bury you. My bell sometimes sounds at the dead of night or at three in the morning. “Would you come and pray for a dying person?” They even say, “Pray *to* some dying person.” Why do they send for me? Why do they not think of sending for me when the man is in good health? They send for me when the man has taken stupefying drugs, perhaps, to lull pain, or he is half asleep with coming death, or his suffering is so intense that he cannot think! Or if he can think, he counts on my coming and my visit rather ministers to his superstition than to his benefit! Religion is for life as well as death. It is for today. “*Now* are we the sons of God.” Oh, have the gospel today, today, today, today! It is said that every man ought to repent on the last day of his life—this day may be yours—“Therefore, today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” I have many things to say unto you, but time flies and I have much more left. This is the first head, then. Faith makes the grandest of all distinctions.

**II.** Secondly, FAITH OBTAINS THE GRANDEST OF ALL ENDOWMENTS. Read, “To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” The margin says the “privilege.” The margin is right, but so is the common reading. The word *exousia* is a very great word in the Greek. It cannot be comprehended in the word, “privilege,” at all. It means power, privilege and a great deal more. Everyone that has believed in Jesus has received the privilege, the power, and everything else that lies in being a son of God. This is described as being a privilege peculiar to believers and yet there are rogues who are everlastingly talking about the “fatherhood” of God because He made them. I suppose the man who made that table is the father of the table. They assert that the Creator is the Father of all His creatures. That is not the sense in which believers say, “Our Father which art in heaven.” If you are children of the devil and doing his works, why call God your Father? How dare you? If you have not believed on the Son of God, He is not your Father in the sense of the text—and you have no right to think of yourself as His son! The privilege of the text is, “to as many as received Him,” for, “to them gave He the power” or, “the *privilege* to become the sons of God.” As for the unbeliever, what is written concerning him? “The wrath of God abides on him.”

Now, there is a distinction intended here in the use of this word, “son,” rather than the old legal word servant. The most that they could attain to under the old dispensation was to be servants. “Moses was faithful in all his house as a servant.” Yes, that is all. And what a blessed thing to be a servant of God! The poor prodigal would have been glad enough to have been one of the hired servants. But says our Master, “Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his Lord does, but I have called you friends.” And we know who has said, “For this cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren,” because they are sons in the same house. Oh, what a pleasure to rise from slavery to sonship! From the bondage of the law to the glorious liberty of the children of God! And that is where we all are who

have believed. Only sometimes, you know, we do not live up to this sonship privilege. Those who are under the law do not rise to sonship. They may be sons, but they are in their minority and the child, while he is yet in his minority, differs little from a servant, though he is lord of all. He is under tutors until he is of age. Christ has come and we are no longer under a schoolmaster, but now, blessed be His name, we are the sons of God! Are we not His servants, too? O, yes! Jesus Christ was first His Father's son and then His Father's servant. So we, being sons, have the joy of serving our Father. And I tell you it is a very different thing to serve your Father to what it is to serve a mere prince or ruler.

We are sons, then, rather than servants. We are called sons of God because of our new nature. We are the children of God by birth. We are also sons by likeness, for the Spirit of God dwells in us and we are made like unto God. The likeness between a son of God and God, Himself, is real and true. Have you ever seen the likeness between yourself and your child? Yes. Yes, he is very much like you. Some points of his character are caricatures of yours! You can see your image, distorted somewhat, and imperfect, but it is yourself. It is as near like yourself as a child can be like a man—but a child is not a man, for all that. So God makes His children like Himself, but they are miniatures, they are little, childish, weak. There are many imperfections and shortcomings, but still, mark that word, I often stagger as I read it—"He has made us partakers of the divine nature." In moral qualities and spiritual actualities, He has given us power to become the sons of God, that is, by making us like unto God, showing us that as He is who was the chief Son, so are we, also, in this world. Oh, the privilege of this! I assure you I would enlarge upon it if I did not feel that I am quite incompetent. I can only stand as John did when he wanted to tell us about it, and could only cry, "Behold," as much as to say—"Look yourself, I cannot tell you!" "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God." We are such by prerogative, by nature, by growing like He, and by privilege. We are now the sons of God.

Some of you do not know what this means. Children, you know, take many liberties with their father and are very familiar. I wonder what the little children of a judge think of him if they are ever taken into court to see him with his big wig on, sitting there trying prisoners? Well, I have no doubt they feel a great awe of him. But you should see him when he is at home! Why there he is down on the hearth-rug with the children on his back! He is the father and the father somehow swallows up the judge. And the child does not seem to remember that he *is* a judge, but only that he is his father. Oh, how many times has my soul, while prostrate with awe in the presence of my God, laid hold on Him and said, "My *Father*, great as You are, You are not so great as to forget that You are my Father. You have taught me to say it, You have said, 'When you pray, say, 'Our Father,' and I do say it, and I feel that, 'Abba, Father,' is the natural cry of the spirit that is within me. Will you not answer to the cry?" He does answer us and like as a father pities his children, He pities us. He bows His omnipotence to help us in our little labors—and bows His mighty arms to help us in our little troubles. "He counts the number of the stars, and calls them all by their names. He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." Is not that a grand stoop from rolling the orbs and wheeling the worlds along, to stoop down to bind broken hearts and to strap their wounds with heaven's court plaster lest they should bleed too much? Blessed be his name!—

*"The God that rules on high,  
And thunders when He pleases.  
That rides upon the stormy sky  
And manages the seas—  
This awful God is ours,  
Our Father and our love!  
He shall send down  
His heavenly powers  
To carry us above."*

But we must pass on. Faith makes the grandest of distinctions and obtains the grandest of endowments.

**III.** Thirdly, FAITH IS THE EVIDENCE OF THE GRANDEST EXPERIENCE, for the text speaks of, "Them that believe on His name which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God."



This teaches us that every man who believes in Jesus is a regenerate man. He has been born of God! What a wonderful thing it is to be born again! There are poor blind men about who say that persons are regenerated by the application of water, though they have no faith, and grow up without any! May the Lord open their eyes! We will say no more, but wherever there is true regeneration, there must be faith. Read the third chapter of John. See how faith and regeneration run together. Read this very passage—“To as many as believe on His name which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of man.” Faith is the first, the unique token of being born again. Now, what is it to be born again? I saw a big man once. A strong, rough fellow, and he was evidently under conviction of sin. He said, “Would God I had never been born.” He thought again and he said, “I remember when I used to pray at my mother’s knee. I knew nothing, then, of the wickedness and vice through which I have gone. Would God I could begin life again like a little child!” I was pressed to hear him say that, for it enabled me to say, “That is exactly what you shall do if you believe in Jesus. You shall be born again.” But if we could be born again as we were born at first, that is, of the will of the flesh, we should do as we did before—for that which is born of the flesh, if it could be born twice of flesh—would be still flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit and, “You must be born again from above”—you must be born of the Spirit of God. What the Spirit of God does for us is to give us a new life to start us afresh with a new nature upon a new career. Whoever believes in Jesus is born again! Regeneration is a great mystery, but you have that mystery. Do not puzzle yourself about the new birth—you have experienced it if you really believe in the Lord Jesus. As I tried to explain it just now, you are born again. You are a new creature in Christ Jesus. You have begun life again. It is of little use to attempt to mend the old nature, it is too far gone. There was a certain prince who used to swear this oath, “God mend me!” But a good man says, “I think He had better make a new one.”

Some men think God will mend them, but they err. I like the drunkard to become sober and the thief to become honest and mend himself as much as he can. But what he really wants is making over again. I have heard of a man who brought his gun to the gunsmith’s to be repaired. “You want it repaired,” says the smith. “Well, what it needs is a new stock, lock, and barrel.” That looked very much like making a new one! You had better begin *de novo*. The old law had for its token the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the distinguishing ordinance of the new covenant goes much further. What does Christ say to His people in the act of baptism? He says, “You are dead. You must be buried and must rise into newness of life.” Baptism cannot do this, but it sets forth our need of the death of the old nature and of resurrection into new life. We must be born again—not washed, not cleansed, not mended up—but made new creatures in Christ Jesus. And every man who believes in Jesus has undergone that wondrous change! He is not born of blood, that is, not born according to the natural way of birth. He is born in a new, celestial manner. He is not born of the will of the flesh—man’s bad carnal will—nor of the will of man, man’s best will, for the will of man, when it has done all it can, has done nothing at all savingly. If you were born of the will of man, it would not answer the purpose—“born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” We need renewal by a supernatural power. God alone can create and God alone can new-create. To make a new creature is a greater wonder than to make a world, because when God made a world there was nothing to stand in His way. But when He makes a new creature, there is the old creature in conflict with Him. If I may be allowed to commit so palpable an error of speech, I would say it takes double omnipotence to re-create! We must be born from above, but we are saved if we have believed in the Lord Jesus. God grant that if any here have not believed, the new birth may be given them—and faith in Christ Jesus.

**IV.** Now, lastly, lest I weary you, FAITH RAISES THE BELIEVER TO THE NOBLEST CONCEIVABLE CONDITION. The man who has received Christ has undergone a new birth which fits him to be a child of God. Now, note, first, the *inconceivable honor* of being a child of God. Ah, if all the degrees, dignities, honors, and titles that were ever conferred by men could be put into a heap, they would not make enough of real honor to be seen by a microscope—compared with the glory that belongs to the humblest, poorest, and most despised son of God! Son of God! “Unto which of the angels did He say at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You?” I know the text applies to Christ, but it ap-

plies, also, to all His people. His angels are servants—they are not sons. It is their delight to keep watch and ward about us, as servants do over young princes of the blood. “They shall bear You up in their hands, lest You dash your foot against a stone.” About the child of God there is even, here, a splendor which is none the less bright because carnal eyes cannot see it. It is like the splendor of God—invisible because too excessive for eyes to see.

I will picture a child of God, if you please, a daughter of Zion. She is a poor seamstress. She has stitched a shroud as well as a shirt and she lies upstairs dying. You would not like to fare as she does. She dwells in a wretched little room. It is scantily furnished. The bed is hard and she lies there in agony. She can scarcely breathe. She gasps for life. She is very poor and those upon whom she is depending have begun to feel her a burden and sometimes say hard words to her. This is a gloomy place, is it not? Come here. I will touch your eyes as the prophet did the eyes of his servant. And what do you see? You see one of the members of Christ’s body struggling for the last time—and about to win the victory. Listen to her! She tells you that Christ is with her! Do you see Him? There He stands in the deepest sympathy, bending over His beloved, smiling upon a soul that He has chosen from before the foundations of the world—a daughter upon whom He has put a garment without spot, meet for royal wear. She is a king’s daughter. Look about the room. Angels are there, they are waiting all around her, waiting to take her home. The Holy Spirit, Himself, is within her soul. Do you see the light of His consolations and revelations? If your eyes are open, you can see it. Yes, the Father Himself is here, for He is never away from the deathbeds of His children! “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” She has grown worse. Her eyes are dim. Her voice is feeble. Listen to her! I am picturing no fancy scene—I have heard it! She is just about to enter into life, and she cries—

*“And when you hear my heart-strings break,  
How sweet my minutes roll!  
A mortal paleness on my cheek,  
But glory in my soul!”*

If she has strength enough left, you will hear her sing—

*“‘Midst darkest shades, if He appears,  
My dawning is begun;  
He is my soul’s bright morning star,  
And He my rising sun.”*

Do not talk to me of Joan of Arc! This is the true heroine! She is battling with death and singing while she dies. Fear? She has long forgotten what that means. Doubt? It is banished! Distress? Despondency? She has left them all behind. She is a believer! She has received Jesus and she has power to be a child of God! Oh, the honor and dignity of being born from above!

Now, note again the *safety* of this birth. If you are a child of God, how safe you are! I am sure there is no father and mother here that would let any harm come to their children. None of us would if we could protect them. Do you think God will suffer His children to be harmed? He will cover them with His feathers and under His wings shall they trust. His Truth shall be their shield and buckler. There shall no evil befall them—neither shall any plague come near their dwelling. “I, the Lord, do keep it. I will water it every moment lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them Me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.”—

*“Safe in the arms of Jesus.”*

Well may you sing that, for so you are if you are the children of God!

And, last of all, though much more might be said, what *happiness* this brings to a man to know that he is a child of God. I remember, some twenty-two years ago, being waited upon by a Mormon who wanted to convince me of the divine mission of Joseph Smith. And after hearing some of his talk, I said, “Sir, would you kindly tell me what you have to offer me and how I am to get it? I will listen to you if you will let me tell you afterwards what I have to offer you and the way to it.” I heard him with a great deal of patience. He listened to me not quite so patiently, but when I had done, he saluted me thus, “If what you say is true, you ought to be the happiest man in the world!” To which I replied, “Sir, you are

correct. I ought to be and, more, I am!” And so I left him. And so I am, and so is every child of God that lives up to his privilege. You are a child of God—forgiven, accepted, beloved—what more do you need? In the name of goodness, what more do you need? If a man were to become an imperial prince, would he say, “I need more”? My dear man, what more can you need? If you are a son of God, what more can you ask? I remember the time—perhaps you remember it for yourself—when I was in bondage under sin and I thought I should be sent to hell. If the Lord had said to me, “I will forgive you, but you must live on bread and water till you die,” I would have clapped my hands for joy! I would have said, “Lord, do but save me. If I can get rid of my sins, the very hardest lot will be a pleasure to me.” Let us never complain, since we are possessors of salvation. The joy of the Lord is your strength. “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice.”

Remember this as a practical word. There is an old French proverb which says, “Nobility obliges.” There is an obligation upon nobles. You do not expect to see great princes sweeping the street crossing. You would not expect to hear of Her Majesty the Queen acting like a milkmaid. Well, now, if you are a son of God, you must act like it! If I hear of a man who says, “I am a child of God,” and he gives short weight and is hard in his bargains—I am ashamed of him! He, a son of God? He who must make money, and hold it, and keep it? He, a son of God? He is not very much like his Father! Son of God! And yet sharp, quick-tempered, angry, spiteful! He is not very much like his Father. A child of God and do a mean thing? My dear brethren, what are you? A son of God and tell a lie? A son of God and afraid of anybody? A son of God and cannot look your fellow man in the face without a blush? A son of God and at home a tyrant? Such conduct will never bear a thought—and he who is guilty of it gravely offends. When the great Emperor Napoleon was in his power, if a member of his family married below his rank, he was made to know the emperor’s anger, for members of the imperial house were under bonds of honor to keep up their dignity. You girls here, who are daughters of God, dare you marry out of the imperial family? Never do that! Take care that you are not unequally yoked. When a king was taken prisoner, Alexander asked him how he would be treated, and he said, “Like a king.”

Christian, act like a king! When a quarrelsome person offends us, we should say in our heart, “I would have quarreled with you, but I could not stoop to it. I am a child of God.” I read a bitter remark of Guizot’s to his enemies the other day, which ran something like this, “Come up the steps and mount as high as you can. And when you reach the top you will be beneath my contempt.” So oftentimes may the child of God think of the world and all the shams, and all the temptations which are in it, “I have a great work. How can I come down to you? I am a son of God. My conversation is in heaven! I cannot leave my position to come down to you.” Walk as children of light. “What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness?” You are “a peculiar people, a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, zealous for good works.” Do not demean yourselves!

Go your way and may the Spirit of your Father rest upon you. Amen and amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John 3.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—533, 448.**

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